

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL  
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

May 22, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.  
Department of Administration

**FINAL MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE**

**TAC members present**

Ms. Fran Shocket, Chair  
Mr. Everett Stuart, Vice Chair  
Ms. Sue Barker  
Mr. Dan Boudouin  
Mr. Michael Bliss representing  
    Ms. Dinalyn Spears  
Ms. Meredith Brady  
Mr. Michael Cassidy  
Mr. Albert Dahlberg  
Mr. David Everett  
Mr. Ronald Gagnon  
Mr. George Monaghan  
Ms. Lillian Picchione  
Mr. Barry Schiller  
Ms. Pam Sherrill

Public Member  
RI Association of Railroad Passengers  
Greenways Alliance  
Providence Foundation  
  
Narragansett Indian Tribe  
RI Department of Transportation  
Public Member  
Public Member  
City of Providence  
RI Department of Environmental Management  
RI Consulting Engineers (RICE)  
RI Public Transit Authority  
RI Sierra Club  
RI Chapter, APA

**TAC members absent**

Mr. Lloyd Albert  
Mr. Alan Brodd  
Mr. Richard Crenca  
Dr. Judith Drew  
Mr. Daniel Porter  
Dr. Robert Vanderslice  
Mr. Michael Walker  
Mr. Michael Wood

AAA Southern New England  
Town of Woonsocket  
City of Warwick  
Governor's Commission on Disabilities  
RI Airport Corporation  
RI Department of Health  
RI Commerce Corporation  
Town of Burrillville / RI League of Cities and Towns

**Others in attendance**

Mr. Steve Devine  
Mr. Grant Dulgarian  
Mr. Andy Koziol  
Ms. Eugenia Marks  
Mr. Christos Xenophontos

RI Department of Transportation  
Ecology Action for Rhode Island  
RI Department of Transportation  
Audubon Society; Coalition of Transportation Choices  
RI Department of Transportation

**Statewide Planning Staff Present**

Mr. Jared Rhodes  
Ms. Linsey Callaghan  
Ms. Ronnie Sirota  
Mr. Chris Witt

Chief  
Supervising Planner  
Principal Planner  
Principal Planner

## AGENDA ITEMS

### 1. Call to Order

Ms. Shocket, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m. Ms. Shocket asked for a moment of silence for the passing of Mr. Henry Sherlock a long time member of the TAC.

On a more upbeat note, Ms. Callaghan presented a bouquet of flowers on behalf of the TAC to Ms. Ronnie Sirota who as a staff member of Statewide Planning has been staff to the TAC for the past 15 years. She will retire from state service at the end of June. Ms. Shocket thanked Ronnie for her service.

### 2. Approval of April 24, 2014 Minutes – *for action*

Upon a motion to approve by Ms. Sherrill, seconded by Mr. Bliss, the TAC Minutes were approved unanimously.

### 3. Public Comment on Agenda Items

Ms. Eugenia Marks, Policy Director of the Audubon Society and member of the Coalition for Transportation Choices was interested in the State Employee Commuter Plan included in Statewide Planning's FY 2015 Work Program. Ms. Marks has suggestions for low cost items that can be done and wondered if this was the appropriate time to express. Ms. Shocket replied that Agenda Item #7 for Additional Public Comment would be a better time.

### 4. MAP-21 Educational Series – RIDOT Transit Program

- **RIDOT Staff Presentation – *for information***

Mr. Steve Devine and Mr. Andy Koziol gave the power point presentation on RIDOT's Intermodal program for the MAP-21 educational series of presentations to the TAC. Mr. Devine began by posing the question: why is rail planning important to Rhode Island? It is important because there are over 450,000 annual commuter rail riders and over 650,000 annual Amtrak riders. I- 95 through Providence currently carries over 200,000 vehicles a day, demonstrating the need for alternative modes of transportation. The Providence Train Station has 1.1 million passengers annually and ranks 14 out of 510 Amtrak stations nationally for ridership. Rhode Island's location on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor is an asset and economic driver for the state. Many businesses locate near rail facilities on purpose. Trains can be engines of economic growth. An example is that Quonset has a booming freight business. Also the younger generation wants to live and work in an area with superior public transit options.

The start of RIDOT's Rail Program involved moving historic rail lines through the Providence area. Moving the tracks eliminated the rail track's physically bisecting Downtown Providence. The presentation included pictures of Providence's Capitol Center before work on relocating the tracks was completed. Amtrak owns the Northeast Corridor train tracks. Rhode Island pays a rental fee as other states do to use Amtrak's tracks. RIDOT contributed \$10 million towards the building of the Providence Train Station and the added capacity track platform and tracks, now utilized by commuter rail service. Limited MBTA service between Boston and Providence started in 1988. Ridership on that service is currently at 2,300 passengers per day. Commuter rail service began at T. F. Green Airport in 2010 and at Wickford Junction in 2012.

Mr. Andy Koziol continued the presentation. He spoke of ideas for expanding service including an instate rail shuttle service between Wickford Junction, the InterLink Station at T.F. Green Airport, and Providence Train Station. For South County commuters, getting home from Providence is difficult at this

time. With this type of service Rhode Island could offer more frequency such as eight round trips per day, i.e., every 40 minutes from Providence Station going south. The challenge is the cost of operating the service since RIDOT does not own the rail track, Amtrak does. There is also the potential for weekend service between the InterLink and Wickford Junction with the potential of perhaps bringing people from South County and Massachusetts to events such as Waterfire in Providence. Other ongoing efforts include:

- Providence Station Improvement Project
- FRA Grant: Long-term Providence Station needs
- Kingston HSR Track Improvements
- TIGER Planning Grant application

Mr. Koziol explained other ongoing efforts including the development of transit oriented development (TOD) at City Centre Warwick, Wickford Junction, and the proposed Pawtucket / Central Falls Station. He explained that rail infrastructure is an important economic asset for development around train stations and rail reduces the burden on highway infrastructure. The Northeast Corridor is 457 miles long from Boston to Washington, D.C.

Mr. Koziol stated that under MAP-21's implications, the program is to maintain a State of Good Repair. In addition to other changes, under MAP-21 there is a streamlined National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and more categorical exclusions for construction projects. RIDOT's goals include supporting rail as a viable transportation alternative and to seek opportunities to expand service. The resources needed include an updated State Rail Plan, which was recently completed and under review by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Another goal is to improve overall transit planning and coordination among the MPO, RIDOT, and RIPTA. Right now Rhode Island is running Massachusetts trains on Amtrak lines. RIDOT is staffed to undertake rail planning, but is not staffed to be an operator of rail. The question can be asked if Rhode Island wants to be an operator in the future.

The presentation was then opened to questions and comments. Mr. Dahlberg asked when a decision would be made on intrastate rail. Mr. Devine replied that a goal is first to have a pilot program, hopefully by the end of this year with service running between Wickford Junction and Providence. If the pilot program is successful, then a RFP is needed to arrange for someone to run it. Ms. Barker suggested that increased rail service to and from Wickford could increase tourism from Massachusetts. Improved bus service from Wickford Junction along with improved signage around the station indicating parking, etc. is needed. Mr. Devine said RIDOT is working with RIPTA on this concept and specifically on providing a RIPTA bus service from Wickford Junction to URI's Kingston campus. Mr. Devine added that Wickford Junction could possibly be a transportation hub in the future. Mr. Stuart asked if CMAQ funds are restricted to what has been in the past. Mr. Devine said that weekend service would be eligible for CMAQ funds. Mr. Schiller commented that Mr. Devine and RIDOT have made remarkable progress however cooperation is still needed to improve connections between modes such as bus, rail, etc, as well as establishing a combined MBTA and RIPTA fare. Mr. Schiller stated that for the environment, we need to get away from fossil fuels and electrify the transportation system.

## **5. Unified Work Program for Transportation Planning, Proposed FY 2015 Work Tasks**

- **Statewide Planning Program Presentation – *for action***

Mr. Rhodes explained that at the last TAC meeting the Unified Work Program, in its new format was introduced. In this updated version, most of the material has not changed since April with the addition of the financial component. Mr. Rhodes began by explaining the financial resources starting on page 87. Table 5.1 includes material on the personnel in the Statewide Planning Program, as well as contracted

services and pass thru grants. It indicates the percentage of the type of funding received for the personnel and contractual and pass thru grants for specific tasks. The financial information indicates where the funds are being allocated thereby giving greater transparency. Table 5.2 indicates by staff member the estimate of time invested for each task. Table 5.3 shows cost for each task with funding source. The numbers are very close to the Governor's Budget. Mr. Rhodes explained that he is hoping to get a recommendation from the TAC tonight for the State Planning Council to approve the Work Program at their next meeting.

Mr. Stuart commented that the Statewide Planning staff will be very busy on the various tasks in the coming year. For example, with the East Bay Corridor Study he thinks of bikeways and the potential for light rail or street cars should be included in the study. He also hopes that the East Providence shoreline is reserved as an easement for rail. Mr. Schiller commented on the State Employee Commuter Task Force whose charge is to reduce state employee vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and hopefully includes looking at pre-tax paycheck deductions for MBTA passes. He felt that this section of the Plan is weak since the bill passed in 2008 enabling the Department of Administration to make efforts to reduce state employee commuting. Coalition of Transportation Choices spoke to DOA Director Licht about this Plan. Mr. Schiller also indicated that there are other low cost improvements can be implemented, including a bus shelter at the RIPTA stop by the State House, as well as the posting bus schedules in state offices.

Ms. Sherrill commented on project 4.2 – RIDOT PAP Report Implementation Program and was wondering the status. Ms. Callaghan answered that they have developed a report which will be presented to the Access Management Task Force next week for review and with a request to recommend it to the Congestion Management Task Force. Ms. Sherrill also had comments on project 10.1 – Transportation infrastructure Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment and would like to hear a presentation on the topic in the future. She stated that as an APA representative, project 13.2 Comprehensive Plan Requirement Training and project 13.4 Unified Development Review Alternative are important to the municipalities. Ms. Sherrill noted that she did see technical assistance to the communities on Comp Plans and graphics included in the Work Plan. Mr. Rhodes replied that section 12 and 13 includes the routine technical assistance and training staff provides on the comp plans.

Mr. Schiller said that the format on what to expect quarterly is good. He mentioned that the project on signal priority of traffic lights for buses is important. There are too many buses at the same time in Kennedy Plaza; busses will have to compete to get to their bus stops. The traffic consultant should look at Kennedy Plaza. Mr. Baudouin commended the staff for the detail in the report. He was on a task force commuter task force a few years ago. It does not seem to be moving. He asked if this Work Plan can be amended. Mr. Rhodes answered that it could. Mr. Rhodes explained that the Statewide Planning Program is a small part of DOA. While Statewide Planning can draft reports, etc. it cannot offer free bus passes or flex work schedules. There is only so much Statewide Planning can do. There is a renewed commitment to move this forward. Many of the associated issues become larger issues where this office will work with others.

Mr. Baudouin moved that the Work Plan be amended to include a recommendation that the State of Rhode Island offer its employees in this fiscal year a bus pass as an alternative to parking. Mr. Schiller seconded this motion. Ms. Brady suggested instead the TAC send a letter to the Governor and the Dept. of Administration Director indicating that the TAC is very much in favor of this being implemented in the current year and be very much in favor of officials considering this. Mr. Baudouin and Mr. Schiller than withdrew their motion since they were in favor of sending this letter.

Ms. Brady then moved that the staff draft a letter to the Governor and the Department of Administration Director to seriously consider offering a transit pass to state employees to enable more to use transit in their daily commute, particularly since this is in the Work Plan. Mr. Schiller seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Schiller added that this is a small but important step. Mr. Dahlberg said that Brown University offers a successful program offering RIPTA bus passes to its employees. Ms. Picchione said currently RIPTA offers an Eco-Pass program, which offers employers the opportunity to offer their employees a reduced cost transit benefit. The Eco-Pass smart card allows employers to subsidize transit per ride, eliminating the need to distribute monthly fare products and encourage transit use. Mr. Dahlberg said that Brown University reduced about 450 cars parking in its lots by implementing this program.

Mr. Baudouin moved that the TAC recommend that the State Planning Council recommend the Work Program. Mr. Monaghan seconded this motion which was accepted unanimously.

**6. Staff Report – for information**

Ms. Callaghan stated that since September, Statewide Planning and RIDOT have been engaged in a comprehensive update to the State's highway functional classification system to see if the roads are properly classified. As part of this effort in June, Statewide Planning and RIDOT will be holding four regional public workshops regarding the proposed reclassification of roads. Staff will also meet with the four municipalities most affected by these changes. At the June meeting the list of changes will be brought to the TAC. This information will be on the Statewide Planning website on June 3 when the notice is sent of the public meeting.

**7. Additional Public Comment**

Mr. Monaghan stated that the Work Program is a well prepared outstanding document. Ms. Eugenia Marks complemented the Work Plan. Ms. Marks stated that she will no longer be doing International Walk to School Day in Rhode Island. Instead Eliza Lawson of the RI Department of Health will be the lead. Ms. Marks thanked Ronnie for her work on the Safe Routes to School Program. She hopes staff will work with the Department of Health on the walking issue. Regarding the State Employee Commuter Plan, Ms. Marks suggests that the staff coordinates with the Health and Wellness Team of the Department of Health to get the news out on public transit.

**8. Other Business**

There was none.

**9. Adjournment**

Upon motion of Mr. Bliss, seconded by Mr. Schiller, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Submitted By: Ronnie Sirota, Principal Planner to Linsey Callaghan, TAC Secretary.

Respectfully submitted,

Linsey Callaghan, TAC Secretary